The Anglican-Lutheran Society Conference in Hamburg

11th-15th September, 2026

'A Changing Church in an Age of Migration'

'Ecumenism in Germany'

The presentation by the Rev Christopher Easthill,
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Thank you for the invitation to speak to you here at the Anglican Lutheran Society Conference. I've heard from other speakers, Leslie mentioned this morning in the sermon as well, that it's very important, this very current topic of a change in church in the age of migration. As you'll see in a moment, I'm going to cheat a little bit and not just talk about ecumenism in Germany, but also a little bit about Anglicans in Germany, which may also be of interest, as we are small but not unimportant.

My day job is as Anglican priest, as the Rector of the church in Wiesbaden near Frankfurt. However, I suspect like most of you still are or have been, I also have a couple of volunteer jobs in the Church. I've just heard about two of them. One is as the President of the German National Council of Churches, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland* (ACK) I've been on the board of that body for the past 11 or 12 years. I'm not sure quite how I got on the board in the first place, except I did not say no quickly enough. I was asked at the very first meeting I attended as the delegate for the Anglicans in Germany, but they were looking for somebody new on the board and suddenly at the following meeting I was elected. And then one and a half years ago, following a Greek Orthodox archpriest, I became the first Anglican in the function as President of this Council. And then I'm involved in the Council of Anglican Episcopal Churches in Germany (CEGS). In fact, I'm what we call the Convener. Those of you who are English, when you hear convener, think more of trades union, but it's not my term. The term we have in there, that's the chairperson of the CECG.

So, I'm either speaking to you here for 2,800 people, that's about the right number of Anglicans active in Anglican churches in Germany, or for 42 million Christians in Germany, depending on which organisation, or both. And maybe that's why I've been given two hours to speak, which I will probably not use, you'll be very pleased to hear.

I want to start with the topic of Anglicans in Germany. And, of course, we're only really here because of migration in the first place. So, I'll start off with a little bit of history.

Anglicans in Germany

The first Anglican congregation in Germany was in Frankfurt from 1554 to 1559. They did not call themselves Anglican, but they did use the Book of Common Prayer and, of course, they were there because they were running away from Queen Mary. They received refuge in Frankfurt, and held services there in the chapel of a reformed congregation until 1559, when Mary went on to greater glory, and the Church of England was restored, and they could go home again. The oldest existing congregation is indeed the congregation here in Hamburg, founded in 1612 by the Worshipful Company of Merchant Adventurers. And then, when we talk about migration, and how did Anglicans end up here, was a very, very big 19th century boom.

That's when most of the churches developed, some of them were royal chapels. Queen Victoria's daughters had a habit of marrying into a European and German aristocracy, and of course they were allowed to bring their chaplain with them. Then we had also holidays, as the Americans and the British started taking holidays to take the waters, to visit the Rhine, to go to the *Schwarzwald* Forest.

Chapels developed all over Germany, and that's how my church, which is the one on the bottom, St. Augustine of Canterbury, was built then, now 161 years ago, in a spa town. And by 1900, we had 63 Anglican congregations across Germany, both permanent and seasonal. Some of them were just open in the summer, or in the *Schwarzwald* in the winter, for people coming on winter and skiing holidays, but most of them were permanent and had a chaplain for congregations, but in those days were also very, very mixed as well.

And then came two world wars. Immediately following World War II, there were only nine congregations left, often with either complete or partial military function. And then after the late 20th and early 21st century, through replanting, through different forms of migration, the military occupation played a role, later NATO, later freedom movement, multinational companies, and most recently, migration from all over the world, we've been able to plant and reopen churches, more than we had then at that particular time. So, we have 17 official Anglican congregations across Germany, with about 2,800 members, still very small. Ten of them belong to the Diocese in Europe, so it's the Church of England, and seven of them belong to the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. So, the American Episcopal Church, both through 19th century history, a couple of them were founded, because that's in places where Americans went on holiday, and some of them through the American Occupation Zone.

So, if we take my church, St Augustine's, Wiesbaden, which pre-Second World War was Church of England, and post-Second World War, in the US-American headquarters, then had Episcopal chaplains coming and running the church, which I am technically as well, although as you can hear from my accent, I'm not American. Pre-reunification, we had no churches, of course, in the German Democratic Republic. Now we have four, if we take Berlin Mitte, which is a foundation in former East Berlin, from St. George's there, you could say we have five churches, or small missions.

We do have overlapping jurisdictions, of course we don't have them just here in Germany, but here in Germany we are united, almost in this Council of Anglican Episcopal Churches. Two of the Church of England chaplains used to be members, but left us, that's Dusseldorf and Leipzig, and they withdrew over the topic of human sexuality. The Episcopal Church has a different position to the Church of England, and that was for these rather conservative evangelical churches a step too far.

They are, however, still part of the family, they're part of the deanery. We meet, we represent them as well at a higher level, and that is, after all, the case in families is that we don't always get on, we don't always agree, but we still cannot deny our family connection. The other thing, of course, is that we have no copyright on the word Anglican, just as there's no copyright on the word Lutheran or Catholic, for that matter, which gets used a lot by all sorts of churches, and so there are a couple of other Anglican churches around Germany. There's one that calls itself the Portland Episcopal Church, or the Episcopal Kirche, or sometimes Anglican in Deutschland, that's been around for quite a while, and is an American offshoot, and there are a couple of offshoots of some of the Gafcon Churches, but they're not very big, and they don't play a huge role, but they are there as well, and sometimes we have to comment on that.

The Council of Anglican and Episcopal Churches in Germany (CAECG) is our joint structure in Germany. (see www. caecg.net) It allows us to have a representation at national level, otherwise I wouldn't be the president of the Council of Churches, I wouldn't be here on the board if Anglicans were not able to be part of the Council of Churches, and that was one of the reasons that we founded it back in 1997 in Wiesbaden. I was not there at the time, I should add.

It has 13 members, and if you're doing mathematics and you say that there are 17 churches, and two were not, that still means there are a couple over, that's because some of our member churches have two sites. So, we have Cologne and Bonn, for example, or the church in East Germany has a branch both in Erfurt and in Weimar. The task of the Council is to assist its members, to assist the churches in the performance of their missionary tasks in cooperation with other Churches in Germany. So, of course, we want to be ecumenically active, doing what churches do, but doing it together. And doing it together means particularly that we meet twice a year, we meet for business, we are an Anglican institution and therefore we have to agree on budgets, and we have to elect people, and do all those wonderful things. But we always use these occasions for training, so that we can learn things, we can talk about things.

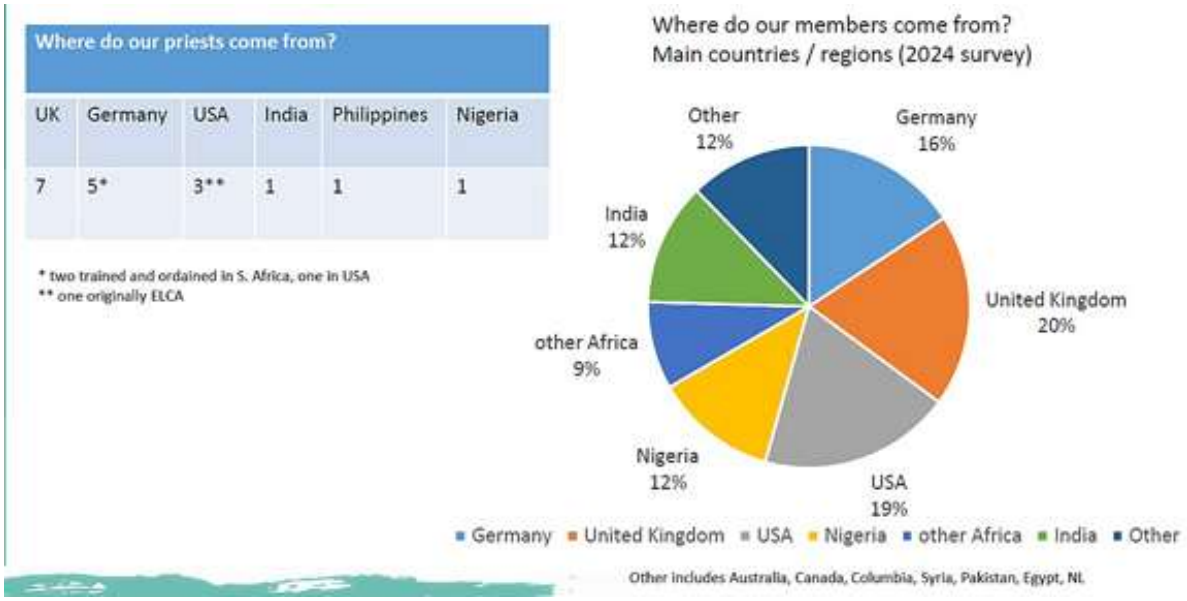
And just next week, in fact, we'll be back in Hamburg at the end of this week, on Thursday, when we'll be talking about the topic of migration, and particularly about the increasing hostility towards migrants in Germany, which of course for churches like ours, which are migrants, is not just a theoretical, political topic, but a very relevant personal topic. And in March we'll be talking about AI, and how we should use it and not use it in churches. And it makes a lot of sense to do these things together.

I should also add that founding the CACG at that time was part of a dream. If we go back to 1990s, the Anglican provinces, jurisdictions, rather, in Europe, had a dream of forming one single Anglican province. And the joint statement of the then bishops in Europe, which was referenced in Resolution 63 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference, a resolution that deplored the existence of parallel Anglican jurisdictions, at that time the bishops wrote that after several years of growing friendship, we've come to believe that the future will involve the establishment of an Anglican province of continental Europe. This conviction was confirmed at a meeting held in Worth, England on the 23rd and 24th of May 1997. However, the Anglican province of Europe has not yet happened. It's not that we've missed it. I still hope it will, but it has rather been stalled. And one of the things that's stalled, I have to say, of course, are the different speeds and different developments of, for example, the Episcopal Church on some topics, and the Church of England on some topics as well.

Talking about migration and our churches and where we come from, well, we are generally international. Some of our churches are called the English Church. One in Hamburg is referred to as the English Church. Mine is referred to as the English Church on the map of the city. But of course, we never really were. That really was more about the language we use in our worship and not about the composition, which has always been more than just England. And, certainly, we are now very multi-ethnic, multicultural and ecumenical.

I've just put together where our priests come from as a bit of a snapshot. And I'm counting here, by the way, just first nationalities. So, in that, I'm in the UK box on the left. I'm not in the German box with my second nationality, so to speak. We have seven from the UK, five who are Germans, two of whom trained and ordained in South Africa, and one trained and ordained in the USA. And we have three from the USA, one of whom was originally a Lutheran from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) who, through its full communion agreement with the Episcopal Church, was able to simply move from one roster to the other.

We currently have one from India, one from the Philippines, and one from Nigeria, who is in fact an associate priest in my congregation. And we currently have two vacancies. That's why the numbers don't fully add up.



The General Data Protection Regulation does not allow us to collect in greater detail the national data per member, at least not to put it into a database that I could access centrally, probably in some dusty file in all our offices. But in 2024, for another conference, I was asked to do a speech at, I wrote to all the chaplains and parish priests, and I asked them, what are the five largest groups by country of origin in your parishes? And in 2024 the United Kingdom was still just the largest group, followed by the USA, then followed by Germany, then followed by Nigeria and India, other Africa, and other countries. And certainly, Africa and India are the ones that are growing. There's a strong dependency of course on, especially with India, because they're often coming here as professionals in software, pharmaceuticals, what is the industry in that city? I have no Indians in my congregation, but I have a lot of Nigerians. My colleague in Munich, I know, has a lot of people from India.

So, we're very diverse. Diverse, I think our parish is not only by national origin, but also denominationally. It helps that we have, I would call it a concept of, if you like, territory membership, you can become a member of my parish without changing your denominational allegiance. Technically, you're signing up to become a member of an association. You can remain a Presbyterian and a Methodist and a Lutheran and a Roman Catholic. And very often, if I've got people who are here temporarily, because they are military, for example, or coming over the multinational, why should they want to take that big step and move to a different denomination when they'll probably go home and go to their home church again? And despite that, they can take part in the life of the parish, including being part of our vestry and our parish councils.

But we also have to be aware then of this diversity of origin in many different ways. Of course, that's a joy and a challenge at the same time. And I asked my colleagues at that time, so what do you do to welcome these diverse nationalities? And some examples are, of course, we recognise different national festivals and celebrations from the various countries.

All of our churches have taken Pentecost as a celebration of diversity. All of them will try and make sure that the Acts of the Apostle reading is read in as many different languages as possible and is represented in the congregation. We normally get somewhere between 15 and 20 languages together in any congregation. And often that's used as a day when lots of different foodstuffs come out. We all

have printed bulletins, and that is a way of welcoming, but you cannot assume that the person coming through the door exactly knows your liturgy or knows it off by heart, nor that they know their way around a prayer or a hymn book. So, trying to make sure that people from day one, the minute they come in, know exactly where they are. I aim for visible inclusion and participation, and all parts of the congregation are involved up front in reading and doing the prayers, and of course part of the governing bodies of the church as well.

And then we have what I always call the Eighth Sacrament coffee hour! So every Sunday in most of our churches, there will be a time of fellowship following the service. Nobody lives around the church, and it's a wonderful time to catch up and to get to know people.

Ecumenism in Germany

I will now leave the Anglican churches in Germany and talk about ecumenism and Christianity in Germany with one of my other hats. So, Christianity in Germany, top left, these are 2024 statistics. The German churches, the two big German churches who are the Catholics and the EKD, have brought out statistics at the end of 2025, but they haven't yet got statistics for all the other churches.

So, this is the last count, in 2024, from the websites of the Federal Office (*Bundesamt*) for those figures on the left, and on the right from the EKD who collect these very kindly for everybody for all the Churches. I can say that the numbers of Catholics and Protestants have shrunk a little bit over the 12 months from 2024.

You can see that we're still just over 50% with Christians in Germany, with at least nominal religious allegiance. I'm not saying that 42 million people go to church every Sunday. Even with all the empty buildings we have, that would probably be too many people.

And then there are the other religions, of whom, of course, Islam will be the biggest, and then Judaism, and many other religions from around the world. Germany is unique, I would say, in not being dominated by one big Christian denomination, like the Orthodox Church in Greece, the Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia, or the Roman Catholics in France and Italy and Spain. Instead, we have these two almost equally large Churches. We have a significant Orthodox presence, of course, mainly thanks to 20th century migration, and a host of smaller Churches. Some of these minority Churches have their roots in the Reformation era, so those that have the Baptist tradition, we're talking about the Mennonites, for example, go right back to the Reformation era.

Many of them are 19th century foundations, when free churches started splitting off, or Christians in Germany, dissatisfied with the traditional form of Protestantism, were influenced by the Baptist movement. And, of course, we have the Methodists, which is partially coming in from outside, and partially adopting a local Protestant group. So, there's quite a variety there when we're looking at the smaller churches on that block. And then there's a bunch of Independent Churches that tend to be Pentecostal in their orientation, and they don't really pop up on our radar screen much because they're very local. So, they're only in one town, and not always interested in ecumenical work, although that's an issue that we're trying to deal with and we try and access them. And a lot of the smaller Churches, also migrant Churches, are Pentecostal and often from an African country. We're trying to get them more involved as far as we can.

The problem we have, it's very nice that we don't just have one dominant denomination lording over it all, but having two big ones does mean that ecumenism in Germany is very often understood as a dialogue. So, the EKD, the mainland Protestant church, talks to the Roman Catholics, and vice versa. And that's understandable when you go into a smaller town, into a village, and they're often the only two churches present. But even there you often find a free church, or one from the apostolic tradition, and I'll talk about that slightly later.

We, as German Churches, have an ecumenical prize that we award every year. And last year that went to the tiny village of Corsin in Brandenburg, a village of 300 inhabitants. But nevertheless, on several occasions per year, that's what we got the prize for, get 600 or 700 people together for a church-sponsored event. And even this tiny village in Brandenburg, we have the *Evangelische Landeskirche*, we have a New Apostolic Church, and more recently we have the Ukrainian Orthodox presence.

So, ecumenism can be more than the two big ones, even at the local level. And one of my functions, one of our functions as German Catholic churches, is to lobby for multilateral ecumenism, and try and make sure that the other perspectives of these other churches are not forgotten, their particular spirituality, their particular issues, their particular problems. And this can often be, it is very often, a global perspective and a migrant perspective.

When we talk about the persecution of Christians around the world, for many of the people this is not something theoretical they read in the paper, this is something they have experienced or their families have experienced at home. We have a very strong Armenian Church presence in Germany, and they help us remind us something that constantly vanishes out of the paper, about how an entire tradition is being wiped out in that former area in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has always been an Armenian Christian country, and how that's been wiped out, and Azerbaijan has lots of oil, and therefore nobody talks about it. We try with them just to get these topics up on the radar screen again.

Other issues we've often had to deal with, when we get up to the Covid time, where there were very strict rules on who was allowed to enter the country to work, and the government decided that religious workers were not important at all, and we lobbied to have that changed. For the big churches

it wasn't an issue, but for a smaller church that relies entirely on migrants, they did not have a parish priest. And we managed to get that rule changed.

Now and again, as a reaction to extreme Islamic tendencies, a politician will pop up with the idea that everybody in Germany should speak German. Now I agree with that, I certainly think we should all speak German, but they then insist upon us doing it in our worship, or even in our sermons, or that all clergy in Germany must be trained in Germany. Now this is targeted of course at Islamic, extreme Islamic organisations, to make sure that we know what they're saying, to make sure that we know how they've been trained, but it's a blunderbuss, and you can't just target it that. If you're going to say that, you have to apply it to all religions. And then we remind the politicians about that, and then it drops off the radar screen again, thankfully, because that could be an issue in many cases.

And, certainly, one thing that has this situation of just Catholic-Protestant has improved over the last years is that we've made many joint statements in public nations about elections and democracy. Most recently, after the election in Sachsen-Anhalt last week, the Roman Catholic Church, the EKD, and the ACK, gave out a joint statement. The election was up, which then I signed for the ACK, to make sure that this perspective is included. And now I also get the nasty letters, which is a fun thing! But that's what happened. And we recently introduced together, or reintroduced, we'd revised it, a document about end-of-life issues from the church perspective, including a living will that people could use, that includes then, is based on Christian ethical principles. And that again was a joint publication from all three bodies. It's actually slightly illogical, because the Roman Catholics and the EKD who are actually members in my church, funnily enough, still like to do things on their own.

Also, very good bilateral ideas that keep coming out of Churches that we try and spread around. There's a wonderful document that was introduced locally, initially just Catholic-Protestant, translated by the wonderful title of, "What Would It Be Like If We Moved In Together?" This is a document about what happens, trying to make sure that when churches pull out of a village, that they talk to each other first, and don't both pull out of the village, but maybe leave one church in the village that is then shared. And we picked this up and said, yeah, when you're having these conversations, maybe there could be three churches in the village, and you could have a conversation with the other one. Or three of you could share a building before you all leave and abandon this place. And there's some wonderful ideas in this document about how to do it, and what to consider, and we're trying to make that more well-known, and to spread that around Germany. And in fact, the local Catholic churches in Berlin now has a staff person whose sole function is to look at it, helping migrant churches who are looking for a church, find out if the church is endangered and closed by the big churches, and could they take this on, and could they use this, or where can they find space to make that possible.

And then of course, if we look at the ecumenical agreements that we have in Germany, these are also not just Roman Catholic and EKD. We have the Church of England and EKD, of course, that's the Meissen Agreement; most recently the Lutherans in Germany, at least those who involved in the EKD, and the Baptists signed an agreement called "Church Communion on the Way", which is sort of almost full communion, but stopping short because they're still not fully agreed about baptism, but they have very carefully defined about 80% agreement on many, many different issues, and about 20% areas where they are still discussing. There's an agreement between all the German free churches, so Methodists, Baptists, some Pentecostal, about pulpit sharing, so that a free church pastor is now allowed to preach in a Protestant church and vice versa, and most recently we've had a local agreement between the Lutheran Church of Bavaria and the Episcopal Church as a full communion agreement. So quite a bit of progress there as well, and a move away from just Protestant/Catholic.

My predecessor developed wanted to remind the major churches that the Anglicans may be small here, the Orthodox may be small here, the Methodists may be small here, but if you look at it from a

global perspective, anything but, and that's a very important perspective that we bring into this religious mix as well.

The German Council of Churches

A bit of the history of the Council of Churches in Germany. It was founded in 1948, just as the World Council of Churches was founded, following the Second World War, by five churches at the beginning, Methodists, Baptists, Mennonites, Old Catholics, and the EKD, the German Protestant Church. And the main aim there was never again, never again would we be divided, would we let ourselves be divided, or let our divisions stop us speaking up about political tendencies, about tendencies in society that were anything but Christian. Never again should war go out from this place. There was a very strong pacifist streak in the founding of the Council of Churches.

Their very first President was Martin Niemöller, a very famous German Christian, also quite famous for his poem, which I'm going to use in translation, because it's quite topical. That's the one that says,

> *First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out because I was not a communist. Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.*
> *Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me.*

A very, very powerful statement, and that is very much behind how we work together, despite theological and of course ritual and other divisions there as well. 1970, we divided into a Western East German Council, so until 1970 we kept a single body across Germany going, but it just wasn't feasible then when the war was up, and so there was still a very close cooperation the whole time. 1974, the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Churches joined the body. 1992, we were reunited into one single new national council. 2003, we had a national level signing of the *Carta Oecumenica*, which had been introduced at the European level for the first time. That took place at the very first Ecumenical Church Convention, the *Ecumenische Kirchentag* in Berlin. It was a very big event so we used that. There were lots of commitments in this document that we then used over the next years to further the cause of ecumenism in Germany.

2007 was a very big step. That was the mutual recognition of Baptism across many Churches in Germany in the so-called Magdeburg Declaration, a very broad-based agreement with the Churches of the Baptist tradition who only wanted believers' baptism, not signing on, but not in a critical way, so we made sure it wasn't divisive. They said, we're happy that you who do infant baptism are agreeing this among yourselves. We think this is a great idea. We commit to recognising your baptism in as much as if somebody moves to our Church and wants to be a part of our Church and has been baptised as a child and is him or herself happy with that, we will not tell them they have to get re-baptised. But because of our emphasis on the personal conscience, if that person says, I do not feel baptised because I don't remember it and it wasn't a statement of all, we will not stop them. Of course, that means that it's not a fully recognition. But we had good conversations there.

And we're at the moment busy expanding the membership to some other Churches who want to join, who weren't able to join at that time. In 2010 was the proclamation of an annual day for the care of creation. This took place at the second Ecumenical Church Convention in Munich.

And since then, we as German Council of Churches, have organised this celebration every year on the first Friday in September. So, it's part of the creation season, which is now, as you know, the activity of World Catholic Churches which is now spread even more across the world. And that's one of our projects.

The Structure of the German Council of Churches
At national level, we have 25 member Churches, 20 of them are full members. The most recent one is the New Apostolic Church. Five are so-called guest churches. That means they take part, they give us some money, they speak at all the meetings, but they have no voting. They are guest Churches.
Some of them, it's just they're not quite ready themselves for full membership. The Pentecostal tradition and the Seventh-day Adventists, they're very happy with that status. We have some institutional observers.

There's a grassroots ecumenical movement. There's the *Christinnenrat*, that's the Council of Female Christians, which is an ecumenical body to further mission opportunities for women in the Church. There's a cross-mission society, The Evangelical Alliance, that is an observer at our meetings. And the Quakers are under the status of institutional observer and not member, for some reason that they will understand.

We meet twice a year for General Assembly. Rather, as I just said earlier, we have organisational decisions that have to take place. But it also includes study days and keynotes.

Last year we met in Cologne Cathedral and had a wonderful private tour of the cathedral. You can see all the five-member board, pictured here with our General Secretary, who we put in the middle, because otherwise you would have seen five men standing there. And that way, they could squeeze a female into the picture. This is disappointing of course, but if you have the Orthodox Church and their member has to be a bishop, you have the Roman Catholic Church and their board member has to be a bishop. You've got two churches that can only send men. The other Churches could. In the past could send a woman: the free church member for many years was Rosemary Benner, the Methodist bishop. And she was there on the board. We'll see what happens at the next elections.

And our subject here, I think that's very similar to the way Catholic churches are organised in other countries, is that each member represents a certain church family. So, we have one for the EKD, we have one for the Roman Catholic Church. The EKD's member is Bishop Gold from the Church in Baden-Württemberg. I have to shout out because I'm over-represented here. I need to stand up and say, yay. It's like people in Württemberg don't do that. They're very quiet in the back.
We seem to have a Baden-Württemberg chair point because the Roman Catholic representative, Peter Birkhoff, is the Suffragan bishop in Freiburg. Down in that corner of Germany, René de Hammers, who is a Roman Catholic, is our General Secretary. You see myself there. I represent a mixed church family of people who did not fit into the other groups. I think technically we're called *Altkonfessorelle*. Sometimes I just say it's the *Klingliche West* – it's the Anglicans, it's the old Catholics, it's the independent Lutherans, and it's a Reformed Church in Lower Saxony that has never joined the EKD. What we have in common is that we have a structure of worship. We are hierarchically organised, like the Churches on the left, so we don't really fit into the free church bracket, but we're also not part of the Mainline Churches. There's only four member churches. Now you can guess how I got elected to the board because there wasn't much choice.

Then we have the Orthodox Bishops Conference. It was the Greek Orthodox Church that was supposed to join the Council of Churches. Now because so many other different Orthodox Churches have moved to Germany, from the Greeks, the Russians, the Serbians, the Romanians, and on and on and on, some years ago they formed their own Orthodox Bishops Conference. So, they have independent churches, they're all under their own hierarchies, but nevertheless they've given themselves a structure in Germany to allow them, rather like us, to be a member, and to act together, and to learn together, and work together.

We have a central office in Frankfurt, which currently has seven staff positions, so they're not all full-time, and two positions that we finance via project financing I'll talk about later. It's not going to stay that way. We are at the moment in the process of restructuring and reorganising, and we'll be cutting that down to three and a half positions in total, with these two project positions that are still paid for. Our problem is not that we have less money than before. 80% of our budget comes from two big churches, and they very kindly remind me every time I talk about money, which I do frequently, that they continue to pay us the same amount. They're not cutting it, and that's wonderful, and of course there are many organisations within the big Churches that have seen cuts in budgets, so I accept that, but the fact of course is that if you've been paying me the same amount of money for 20 years, it's not worth as much anymore. Salaries have gone up, and that's one of our main costs with seven-staff, and events like this, as your organisers will know, get more and more costly to run.

Church conference centres used to be really cheap. Now they're profit centres. Travel, all these things, they've all become more expensive, so with the same amount of money, we're having to reduce and cut costs, and of course that will have an influence on the work we can do, because I can't ask the people who remain to continue to do 100% of the work that was done before. We tried that at the last restructuring 10 years ago, and it cost an awful lot of money in paying their overtime!

We also have regional and local council churches. They are not subsidiary to us; in that sense it's not hierarchical, that we co-operate together. The regional ones are mostly organised on the basis of the German states, but not just. The one in *Hessen*, for example, where I am, covers part of the state of *Rheinland-Pfalz*, has a lot to do with German history and the borders of the German Churches, and the German states pre-First World War. And we have several hundred local councils of churches, not in every town and village. It does take some effort to have that sort of organisation, but in all the major towns. And then there are many, many more informal forms of cooperation across Germany at a local and a regional level. Indeed, later today I'm hopping on a train to Berlin, as the general secretaries of the regional councils of churches are coming to Berlin.

We have our general assembly that's also going to Berlin, but we have a one-day meeting before that with the regional heads to find out what topics they've got, what issues they've got, what ideas they've got. Some of them are our think-tanks. The Council of Churches in Baden-Württemberg, which is particularly wealthy, has always been our think-tank, has always gone ahead with some documents. When the New Apostolic Church knocked on our door and said, we'd like to become more ecumenical, and we'd like you to stop calling us a sect, we don't want to behave like one anymore, they had the first conversations, they put together a wonderful discussion document, listing what is the same, what is different, what do we want to talk about, how can we work with them, and we'll use this across Germany, and they've got other wonderful publications that we have been able to use.

And as our money goes, and as we have to downsize, we will be looking even more just to cooperate across Germany in doing these things, and finding, if you like, a competent centre that can do some of the work for us. We have a Faith and Order commission, which goes by the wonderful German name of the *Deutsche Ökumenische Studienausschuss* (DÖSTA), not to be confused with a Lutheran body

which is called Öster, which is also ecumenical, but that's in the German sense of ecumenical means anybody who's part of our denomination but not German. We use 'ecumenical' in a wider sense.

DÖSTA is composed of theologians from almost all the different member Churches and disciplines. We don't have a representative as Anglicans on that body, we don't have professors here in Germany, we don't have a theological faculty here in Germany. That doesn't mean that we couldn't at some point have a German speaking theologian who is really interested and bring them in, but of course we'd have to pay for them as well. So, at the moment we're not in there, but many, many other Churches are. They take on independent study projects; they've just completed one on the language and languages of prayer. So, something that makes sense to study across the denominational borders, from traditional prayer, from the orthodox prayers, from free church extemporary prayer, to Pentecostal, I-don't-know-what-they're-doing prayer – these are described, but also some models underlying them, and questions asked: How can we learn from each other? What elements are in there that the different traditions can take on? And a book is about to be published. And now they're commencing a study on the Church and Judaism, and this will also be looked at critically. So that's both positive in the sense of reminding us about our roots, and we don't always realise how much our structure, our Churches, our worship is still Jewish in origin, and looking at that across the different traditions, but also looking at the critical issues, both of how we dealt with Judaism, and where we possibly still do in our worship and in our translations. I think you all know a very big topic. John's Gospel, often used, or mostly used around Good Friday, is a very critical phraseology in some of the translations. What can we do about that? So that's their next big study project.

We also asked them to issue theological statements on particular Church events, so a Church anniversary like 2017, the Reformation anniversary, last year the Council of Nicaea, but also the 500 years of the Anabaptist movement. They issued a very, very good document. And then at the end of it we put together a little summary, in a sense of commitments for the Churches, you know, not just write it out, but what can we do with it? How can we apply this to our church life, and to our life as churches in society? This organisation also exists to promote ecumenism in theological education, and organises the study days, both independent of our meetings, but also for our meetings. The topic of theological education is becoming quite important in Germany now. Traditionally, theological education at school level, at secondary school level, has been organised by one of the two big churches, that is Protestant education or Catholic education. Now, some states are moving to a more ecumenical education. However, ecumenical is here defined as EKD/Roman Catholic, and so we're knocking on the door and saying, if you're going to talk about ecumenical education of school children, maybe you should talk a little bit about some of the other traditions as well. They are here too, and it could be interesting to include them. And we're also trying to make sure that people from these other traditions get the licence they need to teach theology at school, which is regulated due to the various concordats and things. You have to have a licence from one of the two main Churches, and some of them are generous with this, and some of them are not. So, we try and make them all generous, because generosity is a Christian virtue.

Theological education at university level is also an issue, promoting ecumenism. Again, here in Germany, it is very separate. You have a Protestant faculty, a Catholic faculty. I think in just one University in Munich, you certainly have an Orthodox faculty. It's not yet ecumenical. There are ecumenical professorships, and they are sometimes endangered by attempts to save money, and we are trying to make sure that, whatever happens, that there is always an element on ecumenism in the theological education of people who are made to become the pastors and priests, so it is not something that they find out about with great surprise when they arrive in the real world.

Other themes and projects

I have mentioned the *Carta Oecumenica*, which was recently revised and was signed at the end of last year in Rome at a European level by the Conference of European Churches and the Conference of European Catholic Bishops, and we're having a celebration and a symbolic signing ceremony tomorrow evening in Berlin. I said symbolic because it's a document at a European level, and a lot of churches in Germany have already signed it in themselves or through their membership of another body. Of course, the Anglicans have already signed it because both the Church of England and the Episcopal Church are members of the Council of European Churches, but there are these smaller churches that are not that are only present in Germany, so for them it is a step. This idea of taking the commitments in there over the 14 chapters, I think, on different topics, of course church unity, but also working together as churches, societal topics, peace, war, IT, AI, youth migration, how we work together with Judaism, how we work together with Islam, taking these commitments and, where they are relevant, implementing these commitments over the next years in Germany. It gives us a programme of work, if you like, and something we're all agreed on.

And how do we start this? We start it with the church service, of course. So, we'll be in the Catholic Cathedral, Sankt Hedwigs, in Berlin tomorrow evening, where representatives of Churches will be signing this document and they will be sending them out. We have something called denominational studies, *Konfessionskunde.de*, which is now online, because that's where you find things nowadays, where you can find information, such as what are Anglicans? You can find that it's both an essay, but also a link to all sorts of material. And that's something that we do in cooperation with a Roman Catholic and Protestant Ecumenical Institute, with the Johann Arne Moeller Institute in Paderborn for the Roman Catholics, and with the Konfessionskunde Institute in Bensheim, on the Protestant side. That saves a lot of phone calls, by the way. People can read about these things and don't have to say, hey, I've got somebody voting as an Anglican. What is that? Are they a sect? Are they Christian? Those are the questions we used to get!

We have the Day for the Care of Creation, is one of our central themes. We have the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, where we organise both the central and the regional service. Next year, we'll be in the city of Wurtzburg. The topic is being prepared by Ireland so we thought we should go there because Wurtzburg has the graves of three Irish missionaries who founded the church there. So, it seemed like a good place to go. This year, Armenia was the theme so we went to Cologne to the Armenian Cathedral. So, we try and make sure that the place we choose has some connection with the host church.

For several years now, we've been working much more closely with the Evangelical Alliance in Germany. My predecessor had a very good personal relationship to their Council and I've been able to continue that personal relationship. By sheer coincidence, I should say, I'm a second career priest. I've worked for the insurance company for 25 years. And so did he. We actually knew each other vaguely when we used to work in Munich. And suddenly, both of us discovered ourselves again in a church context. They have a week of prayer in January. We have a week of prayer in January. They don't quite overlap. Usually, one leads into the other. And we're trying to make this so we've got two weeks of prayer. And in the middle of it, we have a ceremony where a symbol is handed over. It's like, you know, the *Staffelbeitergabe*, like a relay race. And before the next week opens, it's that weird thing that is called a *Crish*. It's a cross between a cross and a fish. So, depending on what perspective you're holding, it either looks like a cross but if you turn it in a different direction, it looks like a fish. And we thought that was quite good and set the symbolism of two organisations that are both Christian, that are both ecumenical, that are both missional, but nevertheless have a very different character.

We have the Ecumenical Peace Decade in November, which means 10 days, in case you're worried that it's a 10-year-long event. And that is one of the few things that we have kept from the East German Council of Churches. That was something they did, and we kept this on. There's a very well-known sticker in East Germany based on the Micah passage, turning swords into ploughshares. And it was sort of in the pacifist regime in the German Democratic Republic, and that's the symbol of this body. And then we organise, again, these 10 days every year with a central service. This time, for some weird reason, now on *Chiemsee* in Bavaria. But lots of material, a different headline theme each year and this year' is "to be courageously resistant", *couragiert widerständig* – and thinking about what's going on politically, not just in Germany, we will need quite a lot of that sort of courageous resistance in the Churches.

We have the Bible Sunday, an annual Bible Sunday, that we also help organise in cooperation with the missionary societies, with the German Bible Society and the Roman Catholic Bible Society. And there's a special theme for an annual Bible Sunday. Of course, I do hope that the Bible is not just a theme once a year in our churches.

I forgot to say, that's this year's symbol for the day of creation, which we just had last Friday week, which is taken from the Book of Job: "Do you know how big, how wide the earth is?" putting things in perspective, and putting humanity in perspective, and reminding ourselves that we are part of creation and not its owners. These projects continue.

I've mentioned that we recognise important anniversaries. Last year was the Council of Nicaea, 500 years of the Anabaptist movement. Nicaea, everyone already knew about; the Anabaptist movement, maybe wasn't quite so well known, so it allowed us to make both people within and without the churches aware of the long and rich history of these people in Germany, and what they've gone through including, of course, the persecution they suffered at the hands of the majority Churches. And there was a lot of healing of memory services that went on during that time. It was wonderful. We had our central service in Hamburg. We even got the *Bundespräsident*, the Federal President, to come and speak, which is not easy. He has a fairly full calendar, so that was very, very pleasing indeed.

It was quite interesting, of course, because the Baptist movement has a very strong pacifist streak in it. A number of the churches call themselves peace churches. I wouldn't say he complained about it, but he did say, considering war in Ukraine, the necessity of war. So, we have engaged debates also about that, and that is very, very important. 2027 will be the 20th anniversary of the Magdeburg Declaration on the Mutual Recognition of Baptism. As I mentioned earlier, we are going to have further Churches joining, who were not able to join at that time, but still not the Churches in the Baptist tradition. We haven't quite overcome that yet.

2030, I really don't need to tell a room of people of the Anglican-Lutheran Society, is the 500th anniversary of the *Confessio Augustana*, that major document of the Lutheran Reformation, still relevant today.

That's not our celebration. There will be a lot going on from the Lutheran side, but we will also try and be part of that. I mentioned earlier that our Faith and Order Commission will write words, papers, on these anniversaries. They will prepare something for this, putting it in an ecumenical perspective, and also with a single paper with some suggestions about what that means for us as all the Churches in Germany. That is something we want to celebrate with our sisters and brothers.

We are often on the road. We take part not just in the things like the *Kirchentag* and other conventions when we can. We try and go to the conventions and synods of our member Churches and show presence there, and bring a *Grußwort*, which of course is more than one word. One thing we have developed over the years is the candy bar, which you can see there, a lot of from the company Haribo, who I hope will give us a rebate as we use all their stuff! We have one sweet for every different denomination. We are Anglicans are JVs. I think it was associated with Hogwarts and Harry Potter there. I'm not quite certain why we got that. The EKD is a fried egg. The Baptists have got a surfboard. You can get that, can't you? Baptists, water, surfboard, that works. So, the Old Catholic Church is something with a rainbow. You get a lot of kids. You have long queues of school classes coming there. Which one do you want? All of them, please!

But you also get a lot of conversations with people who say, well, I've never heard of that church before. You can offer a sweet and say, 'Here, try an Armenian!' And you can really get in a conversation. You can tell them what this church is. How long it has been here. Where it is represented? And it's really just a wonderful, funny conversation starter. The most annoying thing is Haribo keeps on changing its products. So, we're going to have to find some new ones now for some of the Churches because they're not producing them anymore.

And it's important that we're at these events to show presence, to remind the people about their brothers and sisters and other Churches, to show our interest. We are always represented at the two big events, *Kirchentag* and the *Katholikentag*. And the three ecumenical ones too. Sadly, the Catholics in principle have said they'd like to have another ecumenical *Kirchentag*, the Protestants have said, no, at least not in the visible future. But we do have a promise from them that the existing *Kirchentag* and *Katholikentag* will become more ecumenical. It's not just about just having a presentation on ecumenism. It's about making sure that in any presentation on any sort of church topic the people talking are not just from one Church, and especially not just from one nationality but bringing in other perspectives and, thankfully, we are being asked if we have a suggestion who from one of our traditions could come in and would be a good speaker on this topic as well.

I already mentioned the Ecumenical Prize and that tiny village with 300 inhabitants where three different denominations get several hundred people together three times a year. We award this prize, sometimes a couple of different prizes, about every two to three years. The idea is to raise up good ideas but also in the sense of best practise, to spread them around, to make people aware of the different things you can do to cooperate, different projects you can have cooperating ecumenically locally. They should be sustainable, they should always be multilateral, they should be grassroots and ideally they should not require too much in the way of paying ordained staff because there are so few of them around nowadays.

One of our biggest projects, and I mentioned that earlier when I said we have two staff in Frankfurt at the head office who are funded by a grant we receive from the German Home Office, the Ministry of the Interior, is a project that started in 2004 and which is in its sixth phase. It's an inter-religious dialogue, so that we get to know each other better. The focus is on the three big religions and those are the three that actually help run it, so we have representatives from the Council of Churches, we have representatives from the Central Council of Jews in Germany. On the Muslim side it's a little bit difficult because there is no one single central body, so every time we start it we have to try and find somebody new because they've often reorganised themselves. They sometimes have issues.

They are very strongly influenced from outside of the Muslim population in Germany, the majority Turkish, and there's a very strong governmental influence on them. Basically, they're run by the Ministry of Religion in Ankara and that shows sometimes in their decisions and the projects they're willing to support and not support, so at the moment we don't have them on board, which is a pity because they do make up most of the mosques in Germany, but we have the Bosnian Muslims and I think the Moroccan. There are three groups that are helping us on the Islamic side, but the projects that we support, which again are local grassroots support projects, can also include another religion, so sometimes Buddhists, Baha'is are in the mix as well.

The *Ahmadiyya*, when we finally got the Muslims agreeing, they may not be strictly Muslim, but you're not recognising them as Muslim just by saying they can have money for this project. That took us quite a while as well to convince them. So, we're talking about grassroots projects in a city where a minimum of two, i.e. three different denominations come together to do things. It could be an art exhibition, it could be a concert, it could be a day of open church, open mosque, open synagogue, it could be a series of talks on how these different religions view death and dying and marriage and confession and mission, all sorts of things. It could even be a football match with priests, imams and Baha'is and others taking part, but something that helps us understand one another. This has been funded by the Home Office because they consider this to be a very good measure to help us work together and we are the ones who run this on their behalf.

Finally, there are challenges

I've mentioned some of them. It's raising and ensuring the awareness of the diversity of Christianity in Germany, that it's not just *Evangelische and Catholische*. We do have an issue as well in how we're reaching the next generation. If you look at our Board they all have grey hair! How can we get the youth, how can we get the younger generation engaged in ecumenism? That will probably be changing the way we work. Two-day meetings discussing orders of business is maybe not quite so attractive, but it's important and there is interest and there are activities, but they are not in this institution.

Of course, there's a certain, I wouldn't say dislike, but distrust of institutional church and institutional organisation. We are working on that. We did have a study day last year where we invited youth people from all the different churches to say what would they like, what are the themes they would like to see us discuss and how would they like to see us discuss it.

We want to do something, but it is impacted by a financial situation. This is a challenge for us, stable income, increasing costs, focussing, realising we can't do it all. What can we do?

And then finally, I would say it's an opportunity and a challenge at the same time. One of the commitments in the *Carta Oecumenica* is to live and act together at all levels of Church life, whatever conditions – really saying that acting and living and working together is supposed to be the default option for our churches. That is an opportunity, but it is not a description of the reality. And we see one of our functions as Council of Churches is to help make this real and really help.